

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE HUMAN BEING IN THE PEDAGOGICAL SYSTEM OF CZECH EDUCATOR JOHN AMOS COMENIUS

Marija Barkauskaitė, Ona Tijūnėlienė

Introduction

Factors forming views of J. A. Comenius. In the 15th century movements of Protestant plebeian/sectarian nature against the Church had developed in the Western European countries rather widely. They were also supported and encouraged by feudal system. Starting from the Middle Ages all anti-Catholic Protestant movements were notable for their negative attitude towards scholastic education.

One of the most powerful movements was Hussite movement in Czechia in the eastern part of Hapsburg Empire. Russian pedagogical scientists discover the following main ideas in ideological heritage of Hussites:

- Overall equality;
- Elimination of hereditary privileges;
- Recognition of women's equality;
- Teaching children in native language.

In 16-17th centuries most ideas provided by Hussites have become program ideas in activities of Czech brotherhoods (in Bohemia, Moravia, and etc.). (1) p. 9)

Attention to children's teaching was especially high in these ideas. All members of the brotherhood had to be able to read and write in native language, and all children - boys and girls – were taught practical skills like crafts, agricultural skills.

Czech brotherhoods, their ideological attitude were influenced by likeminded people of various brotherhoods and collegiums widely spread in Europe in 15-16th centuries seeking to implement society transformation projects popular at that time on reasonable grounds as it appeared to them: T. Moro "Utopia", T. Campanella "The City of the Sun", I. V. André "Description of Christian City Republic", and etc. In these works much attention is paid to children's upbringing.

These ideas also affected one of the most famous future pedagogues and thinkers John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) who grew, was brought up, and was forming as a personality among members of Czech brotherhood.

Existing life circumstances in his childhood, adolescence were a significant factor for his upbringing. Due to early parental loss he was fitfully learning at the brotherhood school, and after turning 16 years of age he entered the Latin school. It allowed him to think over all teaching organization system, lack of teaching approaches in it. His years of studies he later called wasted. It is no coincidence that negative personal experience encouraged J. A. Comenius to solve issues related to organization of schools' work and improvement of teaching approaches, and also rearrangement of teaching content.

Pedagogical and philosophical views of J. A. Comenius were strengthened due to considerable influence of F. Bacon who was up to writing a large work "Instauratio Magna". In this work he planned to develop an idea that a human being should occupy nature. He criticized scholastics, raised requirements to scientific work, i.e. prejudice should be alien to science; scientific thinking should be inductive, grounded by research and experiments. This merit of F. Bacon opened the gate for empiricism. Bacon developed inductive natural philosophy. In his opinion the objective of science is occupation of nature. (2)

Learning at a scholastic school encouraged to verbalize an idea that children should get real and beside that encyclopaedic education at school which surely corresponds with their level of comprehension and education.

J. A. Comenius was guided by an idea of wisdom, pansophy essence of which he understood as cognition of all things really existing in the world.

Theoretically this idea is close to encyclopaedic idea widely spread at that time in Europe in the days of J. A. Comenius. However, in fact great thinker's idea of pansophy was much deeper. It meant much more than acquisition of general knowledge about certain area reality. Pansophy for J. A. Comenius meant a reflection in person's consciousness of all that is real with all objections and problems but not fictional.

The idea of pansophy helps to better understand his essential thought about panharmony. It means that everything in the world is organically connected, and separate parts reflect typical features of the whole.

The idea of pansophy of J. A. Comenius played the major role for solution of the issue of education content, organization, and approaches. On the basis of pansophy concept J. A. Comenius also formulated an objective of upbringing: each person should be prepared for his afterlife, life in eternity, but he should also be a smart person in his mortal life. (3)

J. A. Comenius presented his statements of pedagogical concept in his work “General Consultation on an Improvement of All Things Human”.

Ideas of works of this Czech thinker have already been propagated to Lithuanian readers in the beginning of 20th century (4), and his “The Great Didactic” with an introduction written by M. Rackauskas was published in Kaunas in 1927. (5)

Human essence in works of J. A. Comenius. The human is interpreted by J. A. Comenius as the most perfect and honourable God’s creation gifted with various gifts by the God:

- The human being has everything all other creatures have, but he is the only one who is gifted by state, life, feelings, and intelligence;
- The human being is a fellow traveller to eternity;
- The human being is the creator of everything governing all God’s creatures;
- The human being is of spiritual nature. J. A. Comenius confirms this by the words from the Holy Writ: “in order you are not lack of anything I give myself to you by my own by connecting with you in essence, combining my nature with yours forever. This was destined neither for visible nor for invisible creatures”;
- Namely because of this the human being is “the highest top, the amazing microcosm<...>” of all God’s creatures (6).

J. A. Comenius connects person’s life goal with his essence. Firstly, he specified that a person unified with God, who is the source of perfection, honour, and blessing, is given his life to rejoice at it, to live honourably, and to experience the perfect blessing in his life. It can only be felt in case of permanent improvement. The human being has all preconditions for improvement. Firstly, triple life: vegetative, animal, and mental or spiritual. Development of the first life is limited: it does not appear outside the body. The second life appears in relations with things. And the third one is independent. The spiritual life unifying the human being with the God (spirituality), according to J. A. Comenius, is restrained (“darkened”) in the human being as it is hindered by two previous lives. During his life the human being thinks, plans, acts, suffers, speaks, acquires, seeks spirituality, but he does not reach its highest level as such is his being. However, the pedagogue is convinced that this life “should fully develop one day”.

J. A. Comenius believes that a person may spiritually improve by himself. The classic of pedagogy detects approach to spirituality in person’s ontogenesis due to stronger development of inborn powers at separate stages:

- In his mother’s womb he starts his life through his father’s blood drop;
- Assumes a shape of a small human being without any feelings and movements;
- Starts moving and forced by nature the baby is born whose eyes, ears, and other sense organs become open;
- Gradually starts cognizing things, later cognition becomes stronger, the light become greater;
- Person’s actions insignificant, weak, disorderly, imperfect in the beginning become stronger;
- Together with development of body force spiritual power is also developed.

J. A. Comenius connects strengthening of person’s power with activity planning, its performance as the person is destined to act; he has the inborn need for activities and is not lack of them. Activity planning, seeking of its results – actions strengthen spiritual power. According to author’s convictions, there are no limits for improvement. “All this in a noble spirit always tries to rise endlessly”. (7)

The author admits that the human being may also have another life goal and interpret it accordingly but:

- The one who seeks power and wealth will not satisfy his desires even if he governs the whole world;
- The one who seeks for honour will never be enough of it even if the whole world bows down before him;
- The one looking for amusement will never be satisfied by what he has;
- Dedicated to science and wise men will not find limit of activities also.

However, strengthening of spirituality in works of J. A. Comenius is a person's objective related to his essence notable for its spirituality. Using contemporary categories to define spirituality it is possible to state that J. A. Comenius specifies the highest measures of ideality, which are used to measure spirituality, such as wisdom and science.

J. A. Comenius positively values a spiritual person leaving this world. He chooses empirical level to talk about it. According to this author, before human's life flickers out his spirit is already more viable and performs its duties: the person takes care of others, himself. For that reason those who see an honest, wise person dying seem that soil dust is, but they see the person leaving. It was understood by pagan Romans who said that a person starts his last journey. It was also understood by Greeks who stated that a person passes away. Through death a person moves towards another life.

So, talking about being, meaning of life J. A. Comenius notes that three lives and three places of being are destined for each person: from the first to the second life the person moves by taking, from the second to the third life – by dying and rising, but there is no way out from the third.

This life, which a person comes to from his mother's womb, according to J. A. Comenius, is only an introduction to the real and eternal life. As though it is confirmed by us, all people in the world, and the Holy Writ.

Visual life or our nursery, our nourisher, our school, is created for the mankind to reproduce, nourish and act. Things and time in this life are intended for a person. But the life itself, following the Holy Writ, is only a preparation for another life: it is called a ferry, a journey, gates, waiting, and people are called foreigners, newcomers, hired men, seekers of an unchanged city. (8). So, a person is intended for eternity. And if it is so, then this life is only a passage to another life. The God calls upon only after people are ready.

J. A. Comenius makes a significant conclusion covering stages of human's life: a) believes that person's spirituality becomes stronger in this life; b) when leaving to eternal life a thousand times happier is the person leaving from here with "the educated soul". The classic wishes the person to develop spirituality even during his preparation for eternity. (9)

Preparation for eternity is a person's life goal and its meaning. Writing about person's essence J. A. Comenius conceptually describes a life goal and its meaning. The final person's life goal specified in works of J. A. Comenius is an eternal happiness with the God. In order to reach the final goal interim goals, which are also very honourable, expect for the person during his preparation for eternity:

- To become similar to a prototype;
- To govern all creatures on earth.

For this reason J. A. Comenius thinks it is necessary for a person to solve few tasks:

- To become an intelligent creation of the God to be able to govern other bodies;
- To become an image and joy for his creator.

The pedagogue is convinced that these person's features should be integrally connected.

Solution of the first task – guidance – involves person's capabilities to be able to explore and cognize all objects and phenomena, to give them names, to understand everything that is happening in the world. In addition, to know well world structure, causes of all elements, to realize essence of time, be familiarized with bodies of the universe and their position, flora and fauna. Craft skills, "art of speech", i.e. a clear and correct speech, by means of which it is possible to tell about great and small, significant of less significant events so that the asking people would clearly understand everything, were also assigned to person's abilities. As J. A. Comenius evaluates the whole universe as a system, he especially emphasizes that the person should be aware of causal relations of all phenomena, things, objects, events in it.

In thinker's opinion governing God's creatures means using them for their intended purpose and bearing on them in his affairs. Person's behaviour with animals should be ethical and not humiliating his name – "among creatures to behave as a king, honourably and holily (of course, only the creator and the same his servants like us are to be regarded as our superiors, and all others are to be regarded as inferiors <...>)" (10). Such behaviour is necessary in order the human being to retain honour given to him (in other words, the human being should be honourable, noble, and by his behaviour inspire others to respect him). Moreover, the human being should not become a slave of other creatures or serve body whims (biological nature). The human being should know well where and when, how and "up to what limits" things and objects are to be used, and "up to what limits" he is to serve his body or yield to close people. So, J. A. Comenius cares that the human being would be able to cleverly manage his inner and outer

actions. It is very important as in order to preserve person's name it is necessary to be the God's image, i.e. try to approach to perfection of a prototype.

Thus, being oriented to the essence of his nature, the human being should behave in accordance with requirements raised to his nature:

To cognize all things;

To govern them and himself;

To assign himself and everything to the Creator.

Features typical for the human being J. A. Comenius calls learning, virtue or moral, religiousness (or godliness). Cognition of various things, phenomena, languages, arts is called learning. Virtue or moral means not only outer propriety but also grounds of all outer and inner stimuli. Godliness means inner respect, which helps person's soul to unite with the Highest being.

These features are the ground of person's current and future life; they make his honour (dignity), i.e. his essence. All other matters – force, beauty, wealth, held position, friendship, success, longevity – are only additions and only decoration of the outer life (if they are given by the God). These matters sometimes become vanity, a hazardous obstacle if someone greedily seeks having them, takes care only about them neglecting the most important goods, and moves away from person's essence ("buries himself under them") (11).

J. A. Comenius calls such people, who are more concerned about satisfaction of pursuits, unwise. According to him, un wisdom is destructive. If a person thinks that his life is a toy, then he really is a sinner, and God's honour and blessing avoid him. This idea is interpreted in the conclusion: "Let's agree with the fact that depending on how many efforts we make in this life to acquire erudition, virtues, and godliness, we accordingly come nearer our final goal. Due to that let these three pursuits to become the most important task in our life and everything else is regarded as unrelated obstacles, trifles, and spangles" (12).

So, a person creates himself like a person on his own, develops necessary features by himself in order to justify his name.

The human being is a real harmony. In works of J. A. Comenius elements of person's learning, virtue, and godliness are explained as natural. Unceasing influence of God's favour, which gives every person power to be the one he is destined to become, he calls nature. According to J. A. Comenius, wisdom of God has not created anything for no particular reason. The goal is intended for each person; and every person is provided with means, organs, and even auxiliary means to reach that goal in order him to reach such goal with pleasure, not to go against his nature, to reach it with joy attracted by his nature. If a person restrains his nature, he will have to experience a lot of sufferings.

So, according to J. A. Comenius, a person:

- Is created so as to be able to cognize things;
- Fit for moral harmony;
- Able to love the God most of all.

It is clear that a person is able to cognize things as he is God's image. The exact image reflects the original; otherwise it is not an image. Person's ability to know is connected with one of God's peculiarities – omniscience. Some marks of this peculiarity are reflected by a person. It is truth as a person rises above all God's creatures by his clear intellect that perceives close and remote things, investigates secrets even inaccessible matters. A person may access everything that has neither end nor limits. There are no inaccessible matters of a person, but his intellect cannot cover everything.

J. A. Comenius reminds that philosophers called a person microcosm (small world), so a person has no need to add anything from outside; he only needs to develop that he has inside. Wise soul living inside a person is given all organs, such as vision, hearing, nose, taste, and sense of touch as explorers or detectives helping to experience everything that is outside their limits. Since there is nothing in the visual world that cannot be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched, and classified according to the essence, so there is nothing in the world that cannot be covered and cognized by a person gifted with senses and intellect.

Cognition and knowledge is not the only innate desire typical for a person; he is not only having power to bear the work, but seeking activities is also typical for him. It starts from the childhood and continues for the whole life. Every person wished to hear something new, to see something new, to commit something new, to communicate, to provide information, and to receive it from others. J. A. Comenius writes about pursuit of innate persons' powers for flourishing, strengthening: person's eyes, ears, sense of touch, intellect are permanently searching for activities, permanently seeking for it,

and, according to the classic, “there is nothing more intolerable for lively nature than unemployment and standstill” (13).

So, according to the classic, a person guided by nature may access everything, achieve everything, and cognize everything. J. A. Comenius admits that a person has everything in him: “a flashlight, oil, and a tinderbox with all tools. Let him strike sparks, catch them, and turn on the flashlight, - and he will immediately see a splendid view of amazing valuables of God’s wisdom both in himself and the wide world (how everything is coordinated, classified in figures, measures, and weight)” (14). J. A. Comenius admits that Seneca was right by saying that seeds of all sciences are sown in a person, and the God as a teacher brings up deeply hidden abilities.

The classic compares person’s intellect with an eye or a mirror. As there is no need to force the eye to open and look at a thing because it enjoys seeing by itself and seeks light by nature, so intellect always seeks things and is always open for them, enjoys seeing and perceives everything.

Following Cicerone J. A. Comenius states that a person comes to this world with elements of some virtues. His idea is grounded by the following statements:

- Every person enjoys harmony;
- A person by himself is a harmonious spirit both in the inside and outside.

The classic admits that people enjoy each other virtues but wonders why people do not enjoy their own virtues and admit that “various harmonious roots are hidden inside us”. As a person by himself is a harmony both in respect of a body and a soul. The philosopher compares a person with a clock made of many wheels and sound units where one part moves another due to continuity and harmony of movements. A person is the same: “<...> due to a perfectly proportioned body it is worth noting that the first engine in it is heart, source of life and work, which provides other parts of the body with movement and movement measure. Movement handling weights are brain, which magnetizes and releases all wheels (parts of the body) by means of nerves. And variety of inner and outer actions is an exactly estimated relation of movements” (15). The main circle of soul movements is will. Intellect is a lock releasing and blocking movements, which measures what, where and up to what level is to be desired and avoided. All this allows a person to maintain spiritual harmony.

J. A. Comenius considering the human being the most beautiful creation of God believes that even if he is spoilt by sin, it is possible to help him to amend by certain means with the help of God’s favour.

Conclusions

1. Protestant movement against the Catholic Church that widely developed in the Western Europe in 15th century, especially ideological heritage of Hussites with its essential ideas to initiate overall equality, to eliminate privileges, to recognize women’s equality, and to teach children in native language, attracted and delighted J. A. Comenius by their new viewpoint to a person, and became a priority in his decision regarding world vision and life activities. The second factor that turned J. A. Comenius towards a person, its nature, essence, and purpose of life was a scholastic school, where he experienced a restraint of person’s powers during his learning. Thinkers of previous epochs and that time considerably influenced not only development of social ideas but also views of J. A. Comenius.
2. J. A. Comenius interprets a person as a spiritual creature, the most perfect, beautiful, and amazing God’s creation gifted with great gifts not available for other creatures: intellect, feelings, the right and the duty to govern everything in the universe, the ability to approach to his prototype and develop his soul. The person’s essence in pedagogical system of J. A. Comenius is indissolubly connected with the life goal and meaning, i.e. to become spiritual and prepare for eternal life. J. A. Comenius believed that person’s spirituality becomes stronger at separate stages of life; and more spiritual person will be happier when leaving to eternal life.

Literature and reference list:

1. History of Pedagogics, Part 2, Moscow: Creative Centre, 1998, p. 9
2. (Sussana Mastroberti, Martin Klaus Ruppert. *Philosophy manual*. Kaunas: Sviesa, 2001, p. 80.
3. Comenius J. A. *The Great Didactic*. Kaunas :Sviesa,1986, p. 91.
4. Gobis J. About J. A. Comenius and his pedagogical system. *Lithuanian school*, 1924, No. 11.
5. Rackauskas M. Introduction. *Kn. John Amos Comenius. The Great Didactic*. Edition No. 141 of the Commission of Book Publishing of the Ministry of Education, Kaunas: Joint-Stock Company „Rytas“ in Klaipeda, 1927.
6. Comenius J. A. *The Great Didactic*. Kaunas: Sviesa,1986, p. 93.
7. The same, p. 93.
8. The same, p. 97.

9. The same, p. 99.
10. The same, p. 99.
11. The same, p. 100.
12. The same, p. 101.
13. The same, p. 103.
14. The same, p. 104.
15. The same, p. 104-105.

ŽMOGAUS INTERPRETACIJA ČEKŲ PEDAGOGO JANO AMOSO KOMENSKIO PEDAGOGINĖJE SISTEMOJE

Marija Barkauskaitė, Ona Tījūnėlienė

S a n t r a u k a

Šiame straipsnyje rašoma apie protestantiškosios krypties Čekų brolių bendruomenėje augusio ir brendusio Jano Amoso Komenskio iššūkį viduramžių scholastiniam mokymui. Atskleidžiama, kad remdamasis pirmtakų, ypač anglų filosofo F. Bekono idėjomis, taip pat savąja patirtimi, A. J. Komenskis sukūrė pedagoginę sistemą, atitinkančią žmogaus prigimtinius poreikius bei jo prigimtines teises. Straipsnyje ryškinama, kaip didysis čekų mąstytojas aiškina žmogaus esmę, jo paskirtį šiame pasaulyje, gyvenimo tikslą ir prasmę. Atkreipiamas dėmesys į tai, kad J. A. Komenskio darbuose žmogus interpretuojamas kaip harmoninga būtybė.